

## Internal Communication and Social Dialogue in Knowledge-Based Organizations

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**Abstract.** Knowledge-based organizations are constructed on intangible assets, such as the expertise and the values of the employees. As a consequence, motivation and professional excellence of employees are the main objectives of management teams. For this type of organizations, considered as true “knowledge systems”, the employees represent the most valuable resource that is not motivated only through financial means, but also through internal communication, autonomy or social rewards. The research of Eurofound shows that knowledge-based organizations have a low number of trade unions, while professional associations are more relevant for them. There is no tradition to defend through negotiation the working conditions of employees, thus it is important for managers to use the best practices, in order to increase the employees’ loyalty. We conducted a qualitative research concerning the quality of professional life of employees in five sectors of knowledge-based services: advertising-marketing, IT, banking and finance, research and development, and higher education; 15-20 employees from each sector were interviewed. Some of the questions referred directly to trade unions and affiliation, and also to internal communication. Although the results showed a different situation in each of the five sectors, there are few common characteristics: descendant communication is more frequent than ascendant communication, trade unions were reported as missing, unrepresentative or not very active, and the greatest part of employees in this sector are not affiliated, facts that limits the possibility of maintaining employees’ motivation on long term.

**Keywords:** knowledge-based organization, high-skilled employees, knowledge-intensive services sector, internal communication, social dialogue

## Introduction

The concept of knowledge-based organization is generally based on previously developed concepts in the field: the intelligent organization (Pinchot, 1985; Quinn, 1992) and the learning organization / learning community (Senge, 1990). The distinction of knowledge-based organizations from intelligent organizations (or learning organizations) is that orientation to knowledge is included in their mission. For using and generating knowledge, managing information and competencies across variable organizational levels is the main function. Thus, internal communication's quality becomes a key variable in fulfilling the organizational mission.

As a concept, a knowledge-based organization has been defined as "a society of knowledge workers who are interconnected by a computerized infrastructure" (Holsapple & Whinston, 1987, p.77). Other scholars observed that, while computerized work and global market emerged, and most of the terms in this field generalized, focus should be set on transforming knowledge in a vehicle in order to derive real benefits from it (Gupta & Sharma, 2003, p.VI). Thus, "organizations should have mechanisms to create knowledge and manage knowledge as an asset" (Gupta, Sharma & Hsu, 2003, p.2). Accordingly, other papers explored the possibilities and implications of using interest-activated technology as a design rationale for competence systems (Lindgren, Stenmark & Ljungberg, 2003, p.18). Lindgren et al. (2003, p.21) make the distinction between job-based organizations and knowledge-based organizations, saying that job-based organizations are similar to well coordinated machines with a fixed repertory of routines. At the opposite, knowledge work is knowledge-intensive, requires an abstract, technical, and theoretical education (Starbuck, 1992) and enhances creativity rather than routine.

Organizations based on employees knowledge have at their basis intangible assets, such as personnel experience and values, which makes motivating and keeping the most qualified and adequate employees to be top preoccupations of the organization's management. For this type of organizations, considered to be true "knowledge systems", according to Mats Alvesson (2004), the personnel is the most valuable asset; in order to keep expert-employees, financial motivation is not enough, as one also needs to insist on aspects such as internal communication, autonomy, social dialogue etc. To a large extent, knowledge-intensive organizations can be defined as organizations offering knowledge or

knowledge-based products to the market; these products can consist of plans, prototypes, licenses, human training, symbolic messages or mass-products accomplished based on the research of the research-development department. To a small extent, these companies are defined as companies in which work is, to a greater extent, an intellectual one, and qualified and well-trained employees are the majority of the work force (Alvesson, 2000). Ikujiro Nonaka (1994) (cited in Hoffman, 2004, p.244) used the term “knowledge-based organizations” in order to denominate four types of organizations: routine knowledge-based organizations, expert-dependent organizations, symbolic-analyst dependent organizations, intensive-communication organizations.

The organizational chart can be seen as a chain between means and purposes. Departments are tied by their functions and communication channels, and the directions of internal formal communication are usually vertical (with ascendant and descendant communication) and horizontal. For all departments, there are two types of decisions: routine-programmed decisions and un-programmed - unstructured decisions. Specific features of knowledge-based organizations complete these usual aspects, such as: the flatter structure (in order to enable flexibility and creativity), the larger proportion of unstructured decisions and the larger amount of information (which usually should be managed by a communication department). Also, at a symbolic level of power and influence distribution, we could speak about the prominence of expert power, which brings a certain degree of autonomy on some positions, and increases the limitation of the control function. At this symbolic level, scholars emphasized “soft” components as trust-based relationship, externally oriented interactive relationship, and emotionally-inclusive relationship; and their importance in the attainment of organizational success (Wang & Ahmed, 2003).

In the context of the presently debated topic, we find it necessary to define the term of “social dialogue”, as being “the organized ensemble of contacts and actions through which certain groups (employees, management, employers, unions, professional organizations etc.) participate in elaborating the best solutions for the economic and social problems they are confronted with, in bringing together interests and preventing conflicts” (Petrescu, 1995, p.411). The problematic of social dialogue can be regarded from various angles – that of the entire economy, of the branch or of the organization. In general, trade unions have two main objectives: to contribute to ensuring workplaces for all employees and to be equal partners in the relations with employers and managers (Mathis, Nica & Rusu, 1997, p.312).

### **Tendencies in the knowledge-intensive services sector**

According to the data provided by Eurostat, the percentage of employees in the services sector based on employees knowledge (knowledge-intensive) was of 33% in 2007 (a slight increase from 30,3% in 2000), with the highest percent (over 40%) in Sweden, Denmark, Luxembourg, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Finland, while the lowest percentages (under 25%) have been registered in former communist countries, such as Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania (on the last place with 14,4%) (Eurostat, 2011). As far as the subsectors of the knowledge-intensive services are concerned, the highest rate of employment/year was in the “computer and other related activities” sector (an average increase of 5.8%/year during 2000-2006) and “other business activities” (an average increase of 4.7%/year) (Eurostat, 2007, p.5).

The knowledge-intensive services sector (based on employees’ knowledge) has a low level of trade union association for employees, while professional associations are more relevant. As a result, there is no tradition of protecting employees working conditions, which means that it is crucial to encourage this sector’s organizations to follow best practices in order to create satisfactory working conditions and achieve a work-life balance for employees. This sector’s companies, especially the larger ones, consider that establishing and maintaining an adequate environment is an important means of protection against losing the tacitly knowledge existing in the minds of employees – consequently, the efforts are upon the managers – to retain and manage company knowledge is the source of competitive advantage. This happens especially when the labor market is confronted with an absence of “talents” (highly-qualified employees), when organizations spend time and resources in order to keep expert-employees and in order to avoid personnel “leakage” to competitor companies (Eurofound, 2006, pp.17-18). The knowledge-intensive organizational person is interested in the value added to him by the company, intends to build himself a prestige and gain a place on the market, and not only within an organization; when confronted with new issues, he innovates in agreement with company protocol, adding his own vision, and his personality creates, based on the results of his work, the culture and the image of the organization etc.; as a result, he is an extra challenge for the management, in their attempts of keeping him loyal (Leovaridis, 2008, p.867).

Being in a continuous transition and redefinition, Romania, despite having adopted certain institutional patterns of social and political communication

and despite of the presence of certain organisational principles, cannot make substantial progress outside a political and organizational culture. There are different degrees of convergence with international patterns, but we are not dealing with unique sources or patterns.

### **Aspects on Romanian legislation in the field of social dialogue**

Here are several regulations, essential for the well-being of the Romanian social dialogue for the past 15 years: Law 130/1996 on the collective labor contract, Law 109/1997 on the organization and functioning of the Economic and Social Council, Law 168/1999 on solving labor conflicts, Employers' Law 356/2001, Union Law (Law 54/January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003), the Unique Collective Labor Contract on a national level of 2007-2011 etc.

A recent legislative change occurred lately with the enactment of the new law on social dialogue - Law 62/2011 on social dialogue, which repeals all previously mentioned laws. Here are a few new aspects of the law, related to the previous regulations:

- The new law eliminates the collective labor contract negotiation process on a national level, and branch negotiations are replaced with sector negotiations, defined according to the NACE code. Thus, collective labor contracts can be negotiated on a unit level, groups of units and activity sectors.
- The new law establishes a single criterion that can be used for union association, while previous regulations provided for the possibility of association based on the branch of activity criterion, profession or the territorial criterion. Thus, legally established unions can associate based on the activity sector criterion.
- On a unit level, a union is considered representative, if the number of union members is at least half plus one of the numbers of unit employees. The previous regulations stated that the number of union members had to be at least a third of the total number of unit employees.
- As a result of the Government withdrawal from the Economic and Social Council, the enactment provides for the establishment of a new consultative organism on a national level (The Tripartite National Council for Social Dialogue), in order to continue the tripartite consulting mechanism of Government – unions – employers. The novelty consists in the replacement of Government representatives in the Economic and Social Council with civil society representatives.

This change continues a series of changes in labor legislation, which have been occurring for the past years, generated by the need of more flexibility on the labor market, but which creates the premises for employer abuses towards the employees. In this regard, the most significant changes were those of the new Labor Code of 2011.

Thus, the new Labor Code entered into force on May, 1st, 2011 (Law 53/2011). We shall present in the following paragraphs the main changes brought by the new Labor Code regarding those provisions that could create premises for employer abuses, especially in relation to employees labor conditions. The new Labor Code has maintained the maximum legal amount of work hours per week to 48, but has increased by one month, from 3 to 4, the referential period used in establishing that the average work hours per week will not be more than 48. Social partners can establish through collective labor contracts referential periods of 6 months at most, for certain activities or professions – such measures could be used in sectors referring to seasonal activities, when the amount of necessary work is higher during certain seasons. Another novelty brought by this Romanian Labor Code, as compared to the previous regulation (the Labor Code of 2003 – Law 53/2003), is the mentioning of the fact that “the employer can establish individual labor schedules, in agreement with or based on the demand of the employee”. The aim of this measure is, at least from the point of view of the law maker, to generate the premises for the employee to create a balance between the time spent at work and his private life.

Regarding the salary, it will be paid based on the working time, performances or a combination of the two elements; performance criteria shall be established by the employer, and the employee shall be notified in advance, in writing. The performance criterion, as well as the requirement of informing employees in writing on this criterion, has been added to the Romanian Labor Code only in its last version dating back to May 2011.

Other changes introduced by the new Labor Code referring to working conditions (trial periods, temporary work, over time work, annual leave) are enumerated in the following paragraphs:

- The employer needs to establish “criteria for evaluating the employee’s professional activity” (article 17.3), individual performance objectives, as well as the criteria to evaluate their achievement. These criteria need to have been settled upon hiring, as they will also be the fundament of collective firing.

- "The trial period shall increase from 30 days to a maximum of 45 days for executive employees, and from 90 to at most 120 days for those having leadership positions" (article 31.1). One is allowed to hire three persons consecutively during the trial period for the same position, as the new Code provides no limits in this regard.
- In case of quitting/being fired, the notice "is the one who has been established by the parties involved in the individual labor contract, or, the one provided for in the applicable collective labor contracts, but it cannot be smaller than 20 working days for the executive employees and 45 working days for the leadership employees, respectively" (article 81.4), as compared to 15 and 30 days respectively, as was provided for in the older Code.
- A fixed-term individual labor contract can be concluded on maximum 3 years, compared to only 2, as was provided earlier. It can also be extended "provided both parties agree in writing, for the necessary time of accomplishing a project, program or other work", without overcoming the length of three successive contracts, each of maximum 12 months (article 82.3, 82.4 and 82.5), compared to at most two contracts, as was provided for in the older Code.
- As far as temporary work is concerned, the employer is no longer compelled to employ someone with an unlimited contract, after having renewed successively a fixed-term contract for the respective job for at most three years. The contract can be concluded for a maximum of two years, with a possibility to extend it, by a new contract, for a total time of three years – these periods of time have been doubled as compared to the present available ones. The company can refuse a temporary employee and can dispose the ending of his temporary contract prematurely. The length of trial periods for temporary employees has been increased, varying between 2 and 30 working days, based on the length of the contract and the job (articles 88-100). In periods between contracts, temporary work agents are no longer compelled to pay employees a sum equal to the minimum wage.
- Regarding the length of working time, the new Code restates that for the full-time employees this is "regularly an uniform one, 8 hours/day/5days or 40 hours/week with 2 days of rest" (article 113) and "the maximum legal length of the working time cannot overcome 48 hours/week including extra hours" (article 114.1). However, even including extra hours, this can be extended over the 48 hours/week limit with condition that the average of working hours, calculated on a referential period of 4 months, opposite to 3 months as stated in the previous Code, shall not overcome



48 hours/week”. “As far as certain activities or jobs are concerned, as established in the collective labor contract, one can negotiate, through the respective collective labor contract, referential periods of time larger than 4 months, which should not be longer than 6 months”, with derogations up to maximum 12 months, “subject to respecting regulations on health protection and employee security, out of objective, technical reasons, or reasons related to the organization of the workload of collective labor contracts” (articles 114.2, 114.3 and 114.4). In addition to this, “the employer can establish individual working schedules, in agreement with or at the employee request” (article 118.1), without having this provided for in the collective contracts or internal regulations.

- Extra work is to be compensated through free hours paid in the following 60 days, as compared to 30 days in the present regulation, after having completed it (article 122.1).
- Annual leave that needs to be cumulated every year, has to comprise at least 10 continuous working days, compared to 15 as was stipulated in the previous code, in case the scheduling of leaves is fractionated (article 148.5).

## Research methodology

The empirical research of the present article is part of a larger and more complex research, aimed at comparatively studying working conditions of highly-qualified Romanian employees of five knowledge-intensive services sectors, of knowledge-based organizations, as they are perceived by both employees, as well as managers: advertising-marketing, IT&C, banking, research-development and higher-education. The initial research was focused on collecting information regarding: employees health problems generated by the workplace, working time (including atypical one – evenings, nights, week-ends and shifts), work complexity and intensity, professional development possibilities, workplace autonomy degree and the possibility to influence one’s work, organizational culture and communication, decision-making and leadership within the organization and the team, motivational means used, work-personal life balance, professional satisfaction and social dialogue, measures proposed by employees and taken by managers in order to improve working conditions.

Based on this extensive initial research, the present paper shall focus only on the matters of interest to the present article, such as: organizational communication, as well as social dialogue. The interview-guide questions regarding these aspects



were: “How would you describe manager-employee communication (means of hierarchically tasks transmission from top to bottom and of reports transmission from bottom to top: formal/informal, ascendant/descendent/horizontal)?”, “Do you receive all the necessary pieces of information to be able to accomplish your tasks, at the workplace?”, “Are you informed on time regarding the major decisions, changes in the work process, future management plans?”, “Is your superior willing to listen to your issues regarding the work place?” (for the first aspect) and “Is there a union for your company of which you are a member, or are you affiliated on an individual basis to a branch union? If not, why?” (for the second aspect). One of the limitations of the research consists of the fact that on the question regarding union affiliation and/or, at least, the existence of such a union in the firm, less than half of the interviewees answered. The remaining interviewees offered an answer indirectly, by their lack of interest to the subject suggesting that there are no such forms of association within their company and implicitly that they are not affiliated to such organizations.

The sample of the survey consisted of approximately 15-20 highly-qualified employees without leadership positions of each of the above mentioned sectors. We have performed a qualitative research, especially in-depth, face-to-face interviews with the employees with no leadership positions of the five knowledge-intensive services sectors. The respondents came from different organizations, both from the point of view of the source of the capital (both state-owned, as well as private, Romanian and multinational), the company dimensions (small, medium, large), as well as their specialization, so that, based on the opinion of the subjects, to have a wider image on the research topics of the respective economic sector. The interviews of the employees of the five sectors have been performed throughout 2012, each having a length of 60 minutes. The conclusions resulted from the empirical research shall be supported through quotations from the interviews (the employees of the advertising-marketing sector shall be referred to in short as A.E., those of the IT&C sector as IT.E., those of the financial-banking sector as B.E., those of the research-development as R.E., and those of the higher education as E.E.)

### **Research results. Organizational communication and social dialogue in knowledge-based organizations from some sectors in Romania**

The following paragraphs shall present the situation regarding organizational communication and social dialogue for each sector, as it resulted from the interviews.

***Advertising-marketing sector.***

With regard to providing employees with the necessary elements to develop their activities (in order to better accomplish their tasks), two thirds of the respondents claimed to be receiving the necessary information from their superiors (“Yes, the consultation and information parts are democratically performed, the human resources department is very active and present” – A.E.8, 23 years old, Online Marketing Specialist; “Regarding my tasks, I receive in most cases all the information I need” – A.E.12, 23 years old, web copywriter), and only five of them being dissatisfied with this aspect (“We receive elliptic information, and it takes more time to understand and ask 10 persons on what to do, rather than completing the task” – A.E.16, 27 years old, senior copywriter; “Creative briefings were usually very vague – *Do something nice!* I wasn’t consulted before my tasks were established and I wasn’t also informed on management decisions or future plans” – A.E.14, 23 years old, junior copywriter in a multinational agency).

In respect to informing employees on important decision-making from the company management, and the communication of essential changes from top to the bottom of the hierarchy, half of the respondents are satisfied with this aspect, considering themselves informed enough, while the remaining half consider to be ignored in this aspect of organizational communication (“I am bothered that we are not all informed on the changes within the company, most of the time simply *having to catch up*. The working manner is based more on individuals, rather than teamwork” – A.E.12, 23 years old, web copywriter; “Most of the times we are not consulted before our tasks are established. We are never informed on the important changes performed by the management, but we usually find them out through rumors” – A.E.16, senior copywriter).

As far as the communication with the hierarchic superior is concerned, and implicitly, the understanding displayed by the latter, only half of the respondents have expressed an opinion on this matter, with the majority being content with their superiors’ attitudes – “My superiors always listen to me, offer me the necessary support and take into account my opinions on solving issues” (A.E.10, 30 years old, art director); an employee of a multinational agency expressed his discontent in a strong manner: “only the managers seemed separated from the team, and the creative director was extremely tough and authoritarian” (A.E.14, 23 years old, junior copywriter in a multinational company).

With regard to organizational communication, a third of the respondent employees, including those of multinational companies, mentioned the existence of a top-to-bottom formal communication in presenting decisions taken by the management and down-to-top communication in reporting, including through e-mails or in sessions. The rest benefitted from an informal, horizontal communication (“communication is horizontal, informal” – A.E.10, 30 years old, art director, web copywriter, “employee-manager communication is done informally, in general, on equal grounds” – A.E.12, 23 years old, web copywriter). There is a single case in which communication differences were mentioned based on the hierarchic level of the employee: information was transmitted horizontally between managers and team coordinators, and vertically between the manager and the rest of the employees.

Regarding the existence of a union within their company or their affiliation to a company/branch union, all respondents stated that they do not have a union within the company and are not affiliated to one, out of various reasons: they do not trust unions, they do not feel the need to become affiliated to a branch union, they consider that unions have lost their strength or they do not know about the existence of such a union within their branch (“I have never heard of a union” – A.E.14, 23 years old, junior copywriter in a multinational company; “I have no idea, people in communications have unions?” – A.E.8, 23 years old, Online Marketing Specialist; “There is no union and I am not affiliated to any, I don’t even know whether there are unions for this field of work” – A.E.16, 27 years old, senior copywriter).

### ***IT&C sector.***

With regard to employees being provided with the necessary information in order to develop their activities properly (in order to better accomplish their tasks), a majority of the respondents stated that they receive the necessary information from their hierarchic superiors (“In general, I receive all the necessary pieces of information. Sometimes, I need to investigate in order to clear some details – the investigation can consist of searching the Internet for extra information or asking for extra information from co-workers/decision-makers” – IT.E.3, 34 years old, programmer; “Yes, I receive all the information necessary to fulfill the tasks” – IT.E.11, 26 years old, programmer), with only two of them showing discontent in this regard (“We find out information in the run” – IT.E.2, 32 years old, software engineer).

With regard to informing employees on the important decisions taken by the management within the company, on future plans and changes, half of the

respondents are content with this aspect, considering themselves informed enough, while the remaining half feel ignored when it comes to this aspect of organizational communication (“I wasn’t informed with regard to future plans and some of the technical issues took us by surprise” – IT.E. 14, 38 years old, network engineer).

As far as understanding and support from the hierarchic superior are concerned, two thirds of the respondents are satisfied with their manager’s attitude, but there are some who expressed open dissatisfaction in the relation with their superiors (“My current superior is not willing to listen to anything, and his job is not connected to what he can do” – IT.E.2, 32 years old, software engineer; “My superior didn’t listen to me, nor helped me, and always imposed his view” – IT.E.14, 38 years old, network engineer).

Regarding organizational communication, approximately two thirds of the respondents mentioned the existence of a formal communication, from top-to-bottom (“Communication is formal” – IT.E.10, 35 years old, programmer). The rest benefitted from an informal communication, especially to the direct superiors (“Communication with direct managers is pretty informal; with the top management it is formal and in generally, it functions hierarchically, not directly” – IT.E.3, 34 years old, programmer).

When it comes to the question on the existence of a union within their company or them being affiliated to such a company/branch union, all participants answered that they are not affiliated to a union, out of various reasons: for most of them, there was no such union within the company (“We don’t have a union in the company” – IT.E.1, 24 years old, junior programmer), either they stated they did not know of the existence of such a union (“I don’t know if there’s a union, but I am surely not affiliated to such a union because I don’t see it worthy” – IT.E.3, 34 years old, programmer; “I don’t know if there’s a union for the company to be affiliated with and I am certainly not affiliated to a branch union. Until now, I haven’t considered this” – IT.E.6, 25 years old, programmer). Two interviewees stated that they have been affiliated but withdrew, one of them because “the union was faithful to the leadership” - IT.E.14, 38 years old, network engineer, and the other because “the union had no capacity to negotiate on behalf of the employees” – IT.E.5, 31 years old, system engineer.

There is just one exception, one employee of a telecommunication company with 1300 employees, the Romanian branch of a multinational company, stated that he was a member of the company union – “there is a union, I am

a member in this union, but the stability of the workplace depends, to a large extent, on the local results of the company” (IT.E.13, 34 years old, software engineer).

### ***Financial-banking sector.***

Regarding the employees degree of information, necessary to perform their activities (in order to better accomplish their tasks), all respondents of the sector have stated that they receive all the necessary information from their superiors (“Most of the time I receive all the pieces of information that I need and I am generally consulted in advance of having my tasks established” – B.E.3, 24 years old, informatics system administrator). However, the majority of them are not consulted before having their tasks established (“Yes, I receive all the pieces of information, but I am not consulted with regard to establishing the tasks” – B.E.8, 44 years old, customer councilor).

When it comes to informing employees on important decision-making by the company’s management, on future plans and changes within the company, over half of the respondents are not content with this aspect, as they feel they are not informed enough and organizational communication is not developed enough (“I am not informed on all aspects, especially those regarding organization changes” – B.E.5, 26 years old, banking products coordinator; “I am not informed with regard to the important decisions of the organization. I usually catch up on them or find out from other sources. When it comes to communicating, we’re not very good at it” – B.E.6, 27 years old, banking products coordinator; “I am not informed in advance on the changes introduced by the management or those related to the working process” – B.E.3, 24 years old, informatics system administrator).

With regard to the understanding and help received from the hierarchic superior, the majority is content with the attitude of the superior, but there were two respondents who expressed their dissatisfaction towards their relationship with the hierarchic superior, who is either too busy to listen to them, or listens to them, but does not help them in solving issues: “My boss doesn’t have much time, as he is always involved in large projects and is always attending meetings” – B.E.5, 26 years old, banking products coordinator; “My boss listens to my issues, but that doesn’t mean that he solves them too” – B.E.6, 27 years old, banking product coordinator.

As far as organizational communication is concerned, this is sometimes formal, as well as informal (“Communication develops in general horizontally

and informally, sometimes descendent and formally, and rarely ascendant”- B.E.2, 36 years old, HR project coordinator); in some cases, it is just formal, but mostly, it is top-to-bottom, and is decision-transmitting oriented.

When it comes to the existence of a company union or being affiliated to a company/branch union, two thirds of the subjects stated that there is such a union, but they were not affiliated to it, because they believed that their interests were not fully represented (“There is a company union, but I’m not affiliated because I need time to evaluate its activity and decide whether it fully represents my interests” – B.E.1, 26 years old, financial operation analyst; “There is a union, but I’m not a member, as I find it useless” – B.E.2, 36 years old, HR project coordinator; “There is a union, which does nothing for the people, so I don’t want to be a member there” – B.E.5, 26 years old, banking product coordinator).

There were rare cases of employees (two) who were not affiliated either because there was no union, or had no idea whether it existed and lacked the incentive of asking more about it – “There is no union and I am not affiliated to any such union. I have no information on these unions and I don’t feel the need to affiliate”(B.E.7, 23 years old, PR specialist).

There are also two cases of employees who stated that they were affiliated to the branch union: “I am individually affiliated to one of the branch unions, each employee having the possibility to choose anytime the union he wants to become a member of” (B.E.8, 44 years old, customer councilor).

### ***Research-development sector.***

When it comes to the degree of information they receive, necessary to the development of their activities (in order to better accomplish their tasks), three quarters of the respondents stated that they received the necessary information from their hierarchic superiors (just a quarter admitted to receiving only partial information, thus making it necessary to look for the rest themselves). In addition to this, as a feature of the research work, all respondents have declared to have been consulted prior to having their tasks established for them: “I receive the necessary information in order to accomplish my activities; I even participate in elaborating them” (R.E.6, 36 years old, IIIrd degree scientific researcher).

With regard to informing employees on important decisions taken by the company management, concerning future plans and company changes, half of the respondents are not content with this aspect, feeling insufficiently in-

formed (“on a collective level, I am informed on the major decisions, but on a management level, I can’t tell whether I am not informed about management future plans or these plans are actually missing” – R.E.6, 36 years old, IIIrd degree scientific researcher; “I am not informed with regard to the major decisions, the changes in the work process or management future plans” – R.E. 7, 39 years old, IIIrd degree scientific researcher).

When it comes to communicating with the hierarchic superior, and the understanding and help received from him, half of the respondents are content with their superior’s attitude: “my superior is willing to listen to work-related issues” – R.E.6, 36 years old, IIIrd degree scientific researcher; “My work colleagues did not support me. My superior did, and I received support on a coordination level” – R.E.8, 33 years old, scientific researcher.

However, the remaining half expressed their discontent towards the relationship with the hierarchic superior, who either does not listen, nor helps them, or only supports them “occasionally” or “apparently”: “only apparently he is willing to listen to our work issues” – R.E.2, 47 years old, IIIrd degree scientific researcher.

When it comes to organizational communication, this is, in most cases, both formal, as well as informal, based on the situation and the seniority of the employee (“Employee-manager communication can be both formal and informal, based on the employee seniority” – R.E.1, 23 years old, research assistant; “employee-manager communication can occur both ways” – R.E.2, 47 years old, IIIrd degree scientific researcher); it can also be formal on a vertical level and informal on a horizontal level; although, in general, it consists of top-to-bottom decision transmission, it is also possible to occur the other way (ascendant, bottom-to-top): “Vertical communication is sometimes pretty formal. However, often it is possible to have also ascendant communication. Horizontal communication functions on a reasonable level” (R.E.5, 34 years old, research assistant).

Regarding the presence of a union within their company or being affiliated to a company/branch union, half of the subjects stated that there is a union, but only half of these respondents are also affiliated to it, with only one employee mentioning a facility he benefitted from on behalf of this affiliation (“There is a union to which we are affiliated, but we don’t know much about it. Until present, the only <facility> we benefitted from based on our affiliation consists of having a comprehensive set of medical tests done once a year at our



headquarters” – R.E.12, 33 years old, IIIrd degree scientific researcher). The rest are not affiliated to the respective unions, because “They don’t have the power to influence the decisions related to our work or to anything connected to work” (R.E.7, 39 years old, IIIrd degree scientific researcher). In the rest of the cases, there is no union – “There have been attempts to constitute a union, but none was concluded successfully” – R.E.9, 75 years old, Ist degree scientific researcher).

### ***Higher education.***

When it comes to how employees are provided with the information necessary for the development of their activities (in order to better accomplish their tasks), three quarters of the respondents stated that they received the information necessary to their work, as well as information regarding important decisions taken by the management within the faculty, regarding future plans and changes within the faculty. With regard to them being consulted prior to having their tasks established, half stated that they are not consulted, which dissatisfies them; one acknowledges that, based on how high the rank is, the degree of information and consultation regarding tasks is proportionate:

“I am always informed with regard to the major decisions and the faculty’s future plans, but I am not always aware of the situation on the University level. When it comes to the tasks I am assigned, I can say that there are also situations in which I cannot decide upon them” (E.E.11, 39 years old, lecturer);

“I don’t always receive complete information and I am not always consulted before being assigned new tasks. Often, we find out about important decisions when they are taken, without any possibility of a major intervention” (E.E.4, 29 years old, tutor);

“As far as I’m concerned, information is not offered, but rather <composed> during work. I am not usually consulted before establishing the tasks I am assigned, but I am merely informed in 90% of the situations. Yes, I am informed on the general plans of the institution and its management” (E.E.6, 32 years old, assistant);

“I don’t receive the information I need. I am not consulted prior to having my tasks established. I am not informed with regard to the major decisions, the decisions taken within the University Senate Office are no longer published on the website, so I don’t have access to management decisions” (E.E.9, 34 years old, lecturer);

“In general, I am consulted on the future directions and sometimes I can even impose some directions” (E.E.7, 45 years old, associate professor).

As far as communication with the hierarchic superior is concerned, the majority of respondents are relatively content with their superiors' attitude, who either listen to them, but "the situation doesn't change", or helps them by coordinating their activities, but don't listen to their problems etc.: "I discuss with my superiors various issues that occurred during my work, but I don't always manage to change the situation" (E.E.4, 29 years old, tutor); "The relations with the hierarchic superiors are good" (E.E.11, 39 years old, lecturer).

With regard to organizational communication, this is in most cases, both formal and informal based on the situation ("Employer-employee communication is both formal, as well as informal based on the situation" – E.E.11, 39 years old, lecturer); there are also some cases in which it is only formal, from top to bottom, decision-transmission oriented ("The transmission of decisions takes place from top to bottom, or indirectly, from the Head of Department to a professor and then to an assistant" – E.E.5, 33 years old, lecturer; "The manner of transmitting and implementing decisions is a formal, descending one" – E.E.9, 34 years old, lecturer).

Regarding the presence of a union within their organization or their affiliation to an organization/branch union, the majority of respondents stated that there is no union within their faculty and that they are not affiliated to any Education-related union, due to the fact that they don't see any benefit in such affiliation ("I am not affiliated to any union, as I don't see any benefit in it" – E.E.4, 29 years old, tutor).

Only in the case of two subjects coming from public faculties (with a technical profile), there is a university union to which they are affiliated ("There is a union and I am affiliated to it" – E.E.5, 33 years old, lecturer).

## **Main findings**

Taking everything into consideration, we shall present in the following paragraphs a comparative view resulted from the identified situations in the five employee-knowledge based services' sectors.

With regard to the communication to the hierarchic superior, the understanding and help received from him, those of the banking and higher education sectors are content with their superior's attitude (three quarters) – their su-

perior listens to them, even though the situation does not change; they are followed by those of the IT sector (two thirds), those from advertising and the research-development sector (half of the sector's interviewees).

With regard to how employees are provided with the information necessary to the development of their activities (in order to better accomplish their tasks), in the banking sector all interviewees claim to be receiving the necessary pieces of information from their hierarchic superiors, while the percentage is lower in the research-development and higher education sectors (three quarters of the interviewees), advertising (two thirds), followed by the IT sector (half). However, the majority are not consulted prior to having their tasks established, a matter often mentioned in the banking sector (none of the interviewees had been consulted), while just a third of the IT and advertising sectors stated to have been consulted, and half of those of the higher education sector. The opposite are all respondents of the research-development sector, who claim to have been consulted.

When it comes to informing employees concerning important decisions taken by the company management, regarding future plans and company changes, the highest percentage of informed employees is that of the higher education (three quarters of the subjects), followed by the other four sectors (half of the subjects).

In respect to the organizational communication in general, this is balanced – both formal and informal within teams, especially in the research-development sector and in the small, Romanian, advertising agencies; it is predominantly formal from top-to-bottom (through decision transmission meetings) for two thirds of the IT and banking sector employees, but also in the advertising sector (especially for the employees of multinational companies) and those of the higher education sector.

When it comes to the presence of a union within their company, of which they are members, or their affiliation to a branch union, in the case of the interviewees of the advertising-marketing and IT sectors, there is no union in the company and none of the respondents is affiliated, nor are they interested in this aspect. For two thirds of the banking sector respondents, there is a union, but they are not affiliated as they consider that it does not represent their needs; only on an exceptional basis, two respondents are affiliated to the branch union. For half of the respondents of the research-development interviewees there is a union, but only a quarter of the total number of inter-

viewees are affiliated. Finally, as far as higher education is concerned, based on interviewee opinion, there is no union within the organization, nor are they affiliated, except for two interviewees from technical universities, affiliated to the unions of their universities.

## Conclusions

The results of research showed, at the internal level of knowledge-based organizations, the prominence of functional communication in comparison with strategic communication. Strategic internal communication is still a neglected aspect in this sector, a fact that might reflect in the low quality of actions at complex levels as crisis communication or reputation building. Also, an important part of strategic communication is addressed to the aim of motivating employees and strengthening organizational identity. A lower quality of internal communication has a negative influence on maintaining organizational culture and values. Moreover, the lack or the reduced flow of strategic communication in an organization might contribute to the emergence of rumors of an excessive informal communication.

On the other hand, when we analyzed the functional communication, we observed an asymmetric proportion in the directions of vertical communication: the descendant communication is more frequent than the ascendant communication (an expected result, after reported findings of surveys about workplace climate in Romania). This disparity, added to the lack of satisfaction expressed by some respondents about the relationship with their coordinator, also limits the possibility of maintaining employees' motivation on long term.

The last topic explored in research, the social dialogue inside knowledge-based organizations, was lacking the most. Trade unions were reported as missing, unrepresentative or not very active, and the greatest part of employees in this sector are not affiliated. This finding should raise further reflection on the nature of employer-employee relationships in this field, and especially on the unsatisfactory level of information about employees' rights, means of action and limits, for both categories (employers and employees).

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